



DATE 1/15/2015
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DP 1803



The Need for Drug Agents in the Bakken

The population growth in eastern Montana has brought many hard working people to the region. Unfortunately, the boom has also brought the downside: drugs. Local public safety, prosecutors, and medical providers are overwhelmed at the influx of drugs, arrests & prosecutions, and medical room emergencies related to this black market. Police response is reactive only and the need for trained narcotics investigators is critical. **The Montana Division of Criminal Investigation through the Attorney General's Office is requesting permanent funding for two agents** to be assigned to the region and assist the local communities impacted with this drug epidemic.

Supply and Demand

What were once low level local street dealers have now graduated to multi-pound black market entrepreneurs. Add the appearance of international drug trafficking organizations such as the Mexican cartels and the area is seen as the new business opportunity to market methamphetamine and heroin.

The Trifecta

Heroin was virtually non-existent in 2010 but fueled by the opioid problem and the influx of Mexican cartels, the state and region have seen a tremendous increase in this drug.

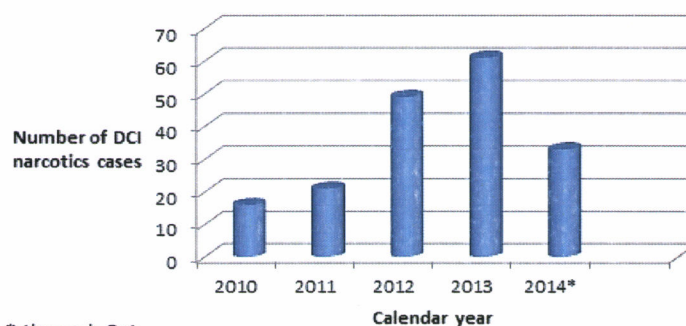
Methamphetamine, which has always been the area, has now tripled in quantities with incredibly high purity from international super labs creating the product.

Prescription abuse has also increased with the number of overdoses and deaths climbing dramatically in the region.



Over \$2 million in street valued methamphetamine & heroin was seized one evening in Billings, destined for the Bakken. - March 2013

DCI drug investigations in the "Bakken" region of Montana



The Numbers

- 281% increase in DCI drug cases between 2010 and 2014. (MT DCI)
- Meth prices have jumped from \$600/ ounce to \$3,000/ ounce. (MT DCI)
- 80% increase for all arrest categories between 2008 and 2012 for Montana counties identified in the Bakken region. (MBOCC)
- Drug abuse cases in Sidney are up 785%. (Sidney PD)



\$55,000 in drug money and 30 firearms were seized as the Mexican Sinaloa cartel was caught trafficking between Southern California and Sidney, Montana.

The Last Two Years

In 2013, the Department of Justice received temporary funding for two DCI Narcotics agents in eastern Montana. The funding expires at the end of FY15. In late February 2014, the agents were hired and office space was found in Sidney, Montana. These agents are the only full-time drug enforcement agents in the entire region. The presence of federal drug enforcement agents was sporadic, and local law enforcement was barely keeping up with day-to-day calls for service with no manpower to shift to dedicated drug investigations.

To date, the agents are just starting to gain traction and developing inroads with the community and transient culture that passes through. Other DCI offices are providing assistance to the agents as needed. We are encouraged by the Federal commitment of law enforcement to the area, but this takes time to develop. While we can't expect immediate results, we are confident that the agents will have a tremendous impact on the criminal element with their enforcement action.

Budget Explanations

- The proposed budget is based on estimates from the Sidney office and the DCI Kalispell office, which is also a two-agent office operating in a similar fashion.
- Fuel costs are projected higher than average due to the longer distances required to travel.
- Rent is based on the cost of office space in the area and the uncertainty of our current landlord (Richland County) who could elect to remove DCI with 30 days' notice.
- An additional \$35,000 is requested for equipment. This is to cover projected costs of updated electronic surveillance equipment which has a useful shelf-life similar to computers.
- \$10,000 is requested for imprest (undercover buy money) funds. The high cost of black market drugs cannot be sustained with the existing DCI imprest budget for the State which is usually expended within 6 months.

Our Commitment

The Montana Attorney General's Office and the Division of Criminal Investigation are committed to the public safety and welfare of Montana citizens. We value the relationships with our local, State, and Federal partners and recognize our responsibility to be fiscally accountable for our funding streams.

The need for drug agents to assist local law enforcement and protect their communities is critical. Thank you for your consideration.



Montana Division of Criminal Investigation

Phone: 406. 444. 3874
contactdci@mt.gov

2225 11th Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620

<https://dojmt.gov/enforcement/>